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## MUSIC: FEATURE

### Cannibal Corpse



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### CARNAGE YOU CAN COUNT ON

By [Omar Perez](#)

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While America has been momentarily fixated on Janet Jackson's breast, Cannibal Corpse has, for the past 15 years, been focusing a bit more intensely on body parts ... or at least what those body parts would look like if mutilated. And though Janet Jackson's Q-rating went through the roof after her publicity stunt, Cannibal Corpse is still operating a bit, shall we say, underneath the radar.

But for death metal fans, the band is among the reigning kings of gore, known for fusing musical brutality with lyrics that are absurdly violent, whether they be accounts of murdering sprees or detailed descriptions of sodomizing pus-infested, festering corpses.

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"I remember talking to a band as early as 1991 and they were telling me that death metal is dead, and that nothing else could be done with that style of music," says Cannibal Corpse bassist Alex Webster. "But we never had that attitude. There's so much you can do with death metal, and it's still being discovered."

While Cannibal Corpse (Webster, vocalist George Fisher, guitarists Jack Owen and Pat O'Brien, and drummer Paul Mazurkiewicz) hasn't been big on change since its early days, it has inspired many of today's death metal acts, although few have come close to matching the brutality of the Tampa band. The band's history is well-catalogued on their new "15 Year Killing Spree" box set; a retrospective starting with their 1989 demo and unreleased tracks from their 1990 "Eaten Back to Life" debut, and including 80 songs from the band's eight studio efforts. It also contains a DVD that includes the band's first show, along with a Moscow performance. "I never could have imagined in the old days that we would have come up with that many songs," Webster says. "It's been tough coming up with a live set for this tour."

By presenting a DVD, Webster hopes to give people a better understanding of the methods to the madness behind the headbanging and the hyper-speed guitar-plucking fingers. "Death metal is pretty technical music, and not everybody is going to get it the first time around, especially newer listeners," Webster says. "And I think a live or studio video can help make the music sink in a little better. When I was young and I started listening to Slayer and Metallica, I couldn't always tell what was going on. I would try to learn the guitar parts, and they were pretty much always wrong."

The band's videos haven't just served as a lesson for fans. Webster himself got a taste of how troubling their songwriting can be while recording a video for "Decency Defied," a track for its upcoming "The Wretched Spawn" album that details the activities of a serial killer. The video portrayed a literal interpretation of the lyrics. "The director put in everything that he could based on the lyrics, and it's very disturbing," Webster says. "Some people have tended to chuckle at how over-the-top our lyrics are, but if you actually see them happening, it's very disturbing. I think the way to get past how bad it is is to laugh at it.

"It's so impossibly gory that there's no way to take it seriously," he says. "We are equally disgusted by our own lyrics."

With songs like "Rotted Body Landslide," "Nothing Left to Mutilate," and "Blunt Force Castration," "The Wretched Spawn," due out this summer, continues on the carnage-torn path that the band has carved during the years, with little variance from past efforts. "We want to be a reliable band," Webster says. "We don't want to surprise anybody too much. The only thing we try to do different is to make every song an individual song that has its own character."

Having formed in Buffalo, N.Y., Cannibal Corpse, like many aspiring bands, relocated to death metal capital Tampa to try to make their mark. After a series of releases, along with a cameo appearance in the Jim Carrey vehicle "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective," the band fired original vocalist Chris Barnes. While Barnes went on to form Six Feet Under, Monstrosity vocalist Fisher took the lead growler spot. "We knew we had to replace Chris with someone really good, and not with a Chris Barnes clone, because there were certain things about his voice we didn't like," Webster says.

The band's 15 years of consistency have allowed them to sell more albums in the United States than any other death metal act, according to SoundScan, and the band members have the luxury of being able to make a fair living from their music. That's something a lot of death metal performers can't say, but Webster is grateful that he and his cohorts can.

"I'll be watching these bands play and they'll be great musicians, and they're like, 'Ah, shit, I have to get back to work the day after we get home from tour,' and I'm like, 'Fucking A,'" Webster says. "You have bands on MTV that are selling millions of records, and they could never play what these bands are playing, and these guys gotta go and deliver fuckin' pizza. It doesn't seem fair to me."